

Project Scope and Work Plan

a. The City of Colorado Springs is seeking GOCO funding for a site development and management plan that will guide cooperative efforts to open the Manitou Incline for public recreation within three years. The City of Manitou Springs is a partner in this effort, and both Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs City Councils have pledged staff and financial support to the plan. Future funding will be sought from GOCO to develop trail and trailhead facilities.

The Manitou Incline is located at the former site of the Mt. Manitou Scenic Incline Railway in Manitou Springs near the base of Pikes Peak in an area known locally as Ruxton Canyon. From 1908 to 1990, the railway carried visitors in open trams to the beautiful summit of Rocky Mountain. When maintenance and safety concerns forced the privately owned railway to quit operations in 1990, the owners removed the tram rails inadvertently leaving a staircase of 2,744 railroad ties up the side of the mountain. This incline has become one of the most popular attractions in the region for amateur and elite athletes, casual hikers and runners.

Despite being substantially private owned and posted NO TRESPASSING, an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 people access the Manitou Incline annually. Users are drawn to the challenge of the Incline's vertical ascent and the network of trails around it. The Incline is a one-mile vertical ascent (straight up) with an elevation gain of 2,000 feet at an average grade of 41%, reaching 68% at the steepest point. Olympic athletes regularly train there, and articles about the facility and its elite users have run in *Sports Illustrated* and *The New York Times*. The Incline is also one of several trails that link key outdoor attractions located in or near Ruxton Canyon. The Incline connects with the Barr Trail at the summit of Rocky Mountain via a social trail on US Forest Service (USFS) property. Incline users typically park at the Barr Trailhead, ascend the Incline and descend on the Barr Trail. The Barr Trail most notably provides access to the summit of Pikes Peak through Pike National Forest. The Ute Pass Trail connects from the Barr Trailhead to Waldo Canyon on Highway 24. The Intemann Trail begins across the street from the Barr Trailhead at the Iron Spring. The Intemann Trail is a 5-mile trail above Manitou Springs that extends from the Iron Spring in Ruxton Canyon east to Red Mountain Open Space then further east to Section 16 Open Space. All of these public users share Ruxton canyon with the Pikes Peak Cog Railway which takes about 250,000 riders to the summit of Pikes Peak annually.

Existing infrastructure in Ruxton Canyon is hardly sufficient to meet the needs of legitimate users, much less the prohibited uses of the Incline. In addition, nearly 20 years of unmanaged, illegal use at the Incline has resulted in a significantly eroded mountainside and dangerous trail conditions there. Past efforts to address these problems and formally open the Incline failed largely due to ownership, liability and management issues – the Pikes Peak Cog Railway, Colorado Springs Utilities and the US Forest Service each own segments of the Incline. This year, however, Colorado Springs Utilities, negotiated a license agreement with the Cog Railway that grants the City of Colorado Springs control of the majority of property for trail purposes, and the USFS has indicated its interest in issuing the City a special use permit that would allow operation of the Incline for recreational purposes. Significant planning and site development must be completed to mitigate user impacts, assure user safety and protect adjacent natural resources before public access can be allowed.

b. The Manitou Incline Site Development and Management Plan will benefit a broad range of interests including regional trail users, neighbors, businesses and the City of Manitou Springs.

Trail Users: The proposed plan and subsequent public recreational access will benefit nearly 150,000 trail users in Ruxton Canyon. As described above, an estimated 70,000 people per year

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access Ruxton Canyon to hike and run the Incline for challenge, fitness and elite training. Many of these users visit the Incline several times per week. Most make the one mile hike to the summit via the Incline and then make a 4-mile descent on the adjacent Barr Trail. Another 60,000 people hike, bike, and walk the Barr Trail to the summit of Pikes Peak; about 20,000 camp overnight halfway up the mountain at Barr Camp. Another 20,000 users access the Ute Pass and Intemann Trails for biking, hiking and running. Ruxton Avenue is also the first leg of the annual Pikes Peak Ascent and Marathon, which draw amateur and elite runners from across the globe to the Barr Trail and the peak summit. Benefits to be gained from the plan include:

- **Improved safety and convenience of accessing area trails.** The plan will identify parking solutions that could include expanded parking areas near trail amenities and off-site park and shuttle opportunities. The plan will also identify pedestrian safety improvements to encourage parking offsite and hiking up to trailheads. Neither the Incline nor the Barr Trailhead is ADA accessible. ADA improvements will be identified.
- **Improved trail conditions at the Incline and Barr Trail.** The Incline is badly eroded, railroad ties are loose and damaged, and rebar is exposed. The plan will provide options for first rehabilitating the trail then operating and maintaining it for the long term. In addition, the plan will address conditions on the segment of Barr Trail accessed by Incline users.
- **Adequate trailhead facilities.** Incline users access the trail from the Barr Trailhead. An estimated 130,000 users share 32 parking spaces, a portable toilet and a couple of trashcans at the trailhead; pet waste and litter are problems. The plan will identify needed facilities.
- **Improved emergency response.** There currently is no good way to access users on the trail in emergency situations. The plan will identify access routes for first responders.

Neighbors and Neighboring Businesses. Hundreds of residents living along Ruxton Avenue and in nearby neighborhoods contend daily with hundreds of users coming up and down the narrow roadway to and from the Cog Railway and area trailheads. Most of the homes do not have off-street parking. Trail users often take up the few available off-street spaces; traffic congestion makes it difficult for residents to get to and from their homes safely. Likewise, parking for recreational uses encroaches into the downtown business district, where parking is already limited, displacing shoppers. Benefits to be gained from the plan include:

- **Improved parking management.** The plan will address comprehensive parking solutions that balance the needs of residents, businesses and trail users.
- **Reduced traffic congestion.** Alternatives for reducing vehicle traffic will be explored, such as shuttles, pedestrian improvements and signage indicating parking availability.

City of Manitou Springs. The City currently bears much of the cost of prohibited use of the Incline – wear and tear on streets, emergency response, parking enforcement, downhill environmental impacts from ongoing erosion and sedimentation - with little direct benefit. There are also questions about liability for general public use. The plan will provide:

- **Comprehensive parking solutions.** Parking solutions for residents, shoppers and recreators will be more clearly identified and enforced. Parking solutions might generate revenues for ongoing enforcement of parking and construction of more parking areas.
- **Clear protocols for emergency response.**
- **Shared liability.**
- **Management of the Incline “scar.”** Proper management of the Incline will prevent further damage to the viewshed, protect vegetation and reduce sedimentation in Ruxton Creek.

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c. Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs are working cooperatively to develop an inclusive planning process that engages key stakeholders as well as the general public. This commitment is outlined in an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) approved by both City Councils. The proposed framework for public engagement follows:

1. **Establish Incline Task Force.** The Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs City Councils will select a task force of members from key stakeholder groups. The Task Force will establish the framework for the public process, will serve as “experts” on issues such as parking, site management, marketing, funding, and liability and will report back to the City Councils.

The Task Force will consist of representatives from the following organizations:

US Forest Service (Property Owner)	Manitou Springs Open Space Advisory Committee
Colorado Springs Utilities (Property Owner)	Colorado Springs Parks Board
Pikes Peak Cog Railway (Property Owner)	Trails and Open Space Coalition
Ruxton Avenue Resident	Manitou Springs Economic Development Council
Incline Club (User Group)	Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department
City of Manitou Springs	

Additional support will be provided by staff from the following City departments:

Colorado Springs Public Communications	Colorado Springs Office of the City Attorney
Colorado Springs Parking Enterprise	Manitou Springs Legal Counsel
Colorado Springs Finance Department	Manitou Springs Planning Department

2. **Convene Task Force.** Review framework for public process; establish project timeline.
3. **Meet with Stakeholder Groups.** Discuss the public process framework; document concerns.
4. **Task Force Meeting #2.** Finalize public process framework; review available data.
5. **Disseminate public survey.** Provide hard copy and electronic options.
6. **Public Meeting #1.** Community-wide invitation. Focus on overall project, public input and issue identification.
7. **First Series of Focus Workshops.** Identify issues and brainstorm possible solutions.
 - Focus Meeting #1: Parking
 - Focus Meeting #2: Site Management
 - Focus Meeting #3: Marketing, Funding, Liability and Miscellaneous
8. **Task Force Meeting #3.** Begin identifying viable alternatives
9. **Second Series of Focus Workshops.** Present and discuss alternatives.
 - Focus Meeting #1: Parking
 - Focus Meeting #2: Site Management
 - Focus Meeting #3: Marketing, Funding, Liability and Miscellaneous
10. **Task Force Meeting #4.** Review public input received; begin evaluating alternatives.
11. **Public Meeting #2.** Report back on public input received and provide range of options for comment and discussion.
12. **Updates to Boards and Councils.**
13. **Task Force Meeting #5.** Develop alternative solutions.
14. **Public Meeting #3.** Recommend preferred options for comment and discussion.
15. **Public Meeting #4.** Present preferred plan of action.
16. **Present Plan to Governing Bodies for Approval.** Public comment will again be solicited.

d. NA

Need, Benefits, and Timeliness of the Project

a. Despite being private property and closed to the public, the allure of the Incline only grows. An internet search of trail guides yields dozens of references to the Incline with detailed trail descriptions and directions on how to access it and only minor warnings that it is illegal to hike there. Last year, *Sports Illustrated* published a short article about the Incline in a story about training grounds for US Olympic athletes, further stoking the Incline's appeal. *SI* wrote:

The most daunting challenge for many prospective Olympians looms over them off Highway 24... Though a NO TRESPASSING sign marks the property, it remains a proving ground for military personnel, law enforcement officers and the country's largest collection of Olympic hopefuls... (March 3, 2008)

The impact of an estimated 70,000 prohibited users annually can no longer be ignored. Because the Incline was never designed nor designated as a trail, there is no plan for the operation and maintenance of the facility – no parking area, no trail standards, no environmental assessments, no rules for use, no funding for maintenance and enforcement, no restrooms. When the Incline was a local secret, these issues were easier to overlook. This is no longer the case. Here's why:

Access, Traffic and Parking: Illegal use of the Incline competes for very limited space in Ruxton Canyon and exacerbates traffic and parking problems. The Incline is located at the top of Ruxton Avenue – a mile-long, narrow, dead-end residential street through Ruxton Canyon that also provides the only access to and from the Barr Trail and Cog Railway, which together draw over 300,000 users annually. Designated parking for trail users is limited to 32 spaces at the Barr Trailhead. Additional parking is limited by topography. Incline users take up parking at the Barr Trailhead, at the Cog Railway, along Ruxton Avenue and on adjacent neighborhood streets, routinely displacing residents, most of whom do not have off-street parking, and downtown shoppers. When parking is not available, users will drive up and down Ruxton Avenue waiting for a space to turn over. This increases the traffic on this narrow roadway, disrupting residents and threatening the safety of pedestrians who navigate parked and moving vehicles between sections of broken and missing sidewalks. These impacts are unendurable for neighbors and businesses and curtail the enjoyment of users of legitimate recreation sites in Ruxton Canyon.

Trail Conditions and Environmental Degradation: With grades up to 68%, the Incline is not a typical trail. It is held together by a jumbled mass of 2,744 railroad ties, and the Incline "scar" can be seen from most vantage points in Colorado Springs. Nature, twenty years of heavy use, and no regular maintenance are taking their toll and users risk serious injury. Railroad ties have come loose and rebar is exposed. Rusted culverts with sharp edges and gaping holes cross the trail tread. Erosion is a significant problem cutting deep gullies on both sides of the trail and sending sediment downhill into Ruxton Creek. Recent record rainfalls have made the problem worse. In one area, a chain link fence holds back two-yards of gravel that if disturbed, could cause a small landslide that would be deadly to users below it. Past efforts made by the US Forest Service to revegetate the trail failed due to steep slopes and erosive soils. Stealthy (and strong) volunteers have hauled timbers to the summit and made some repairs, but their random and illegal efforts amount to a band-aid for a bullet wound.

Damage has exceeded the point where merely closing the incline will not solve the problem. And history proves closing the Incline is nearly impossible. Past efforts to deter use through signage and fencing have been met with bolt cutters and brute force. Users remove signs and push over

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bollards. Removing the railroad ties is not an option because they help control erosion and protect a water pipeline just below the surface. Managing public access is the best solution.

Liability: The deteriorating conditions on the Incline and the ineffectiveness of enforcement efforts against trespassers have created serious concerns about legal liability for users injured on the trail. Enforcement and emergency response weighs most heavily on the small town of Manitou Springs with very limited resources. Manitou police are expected to enforce parking on Ruxton Avenue and the Barr Trailhead and mediate disputes between hikers and neighbors. Hikers frequently park in fire lanes and must be towed away. The Manitou Springs Fire Department provides emergency response to trail users, but there is no easy way to access the Incline, and they risk serious personal injury doing so.

b. On-going and growing illegal use of the Incline demonstrates the demand for public access to it. Likewise, this project has a 15 year history, beginning in 1994, of local efforts to open the Incline to public recreation. Previous attempts by the Incline Club to legalize and manage use are chronicled at www.inclineclub.com/incline/index.htm. They have provided a letter of support and committed to the planning project proposed herein.

Access can only be granted after proper planning and site development have been completed. The City cannot accept the liability for a dangerous trail, and the USFS will require the City to address safety issues, emergency response, parking, liability and environmental concerns before it will issue a special use permit. An IGA between the Cities of Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs clearly outlines how the planning project will address the needs identified above. Specifically, the plan will address:

Parking: Inadequate parking within the vicinity of the Cog Railway, Barr Trail and the Manitou Incline has caused considerable problems for these attractions and the adjacent neighborhood. All options for improving the situation need to be identified and evaluated. Parking meters, parking fees, shuttle buses and construction of a parking garage have been discussed.

Site Management: A management plan is necessary to successfully operate the Incline, minimize environmental impacts from continuous use, and to encourage public and private investment in redevelopment of the trail. At the very least, the plan will incorporate:

- Renovation/redevelopment on the existing Incline Trail and portions of Barr Trail.
- On-going maintenance and operation once the improved Incline is open
- User safety and emergency response

Marketing and Revenue Plan: The Incline is a one-of-a-kind training facility with a national reputation. Revenue generation through user fees, sponsorships and retail sales will be identified.

Funding: Sources of funds for initial development and on-going maintenance and operation will be identified. Sources may include private donations, grant funds, sponsorships, and user fees. GOCO can expect to see funding requests for trail development in future grant cycles.

Liability: Multiple agencies and possible private sector partners will be involved in long-term operations at the Incline. The plan will identify partner responsibilities and liabilities for both the construction phase of the project and the long-term management and public use.

Finally, this planning process has far-reaching benefits. Trail users throughout the region and the state and from across the country will benefit from efforts to improve existing conditions and from future opportunities to expand use and to formally offer amateur and elite athletic training and competition at the Incline.

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c. Political will, public demand and private interests have converged to make opening the incline a promising reality, but only if we act quickly. Past attempts by local groups to open the Incline fizzled due to legal and financial issues. This year, however, the City of Colorado Springs has negotiated a license that gives the City control of the Incline property for trail purposes, and a private foundation has invested \$25,000 to help fund a planning effort. Concurrently, the City of Manitou Springs appointed a Parking Authority Board and developed a parking enterprise that can generate revenues to address parking solutions, and both Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs City Councils entered into an IGA to move ahead with an Incline plan. This momentum can be largely attributed to a Colorado Springs Councilmember who has championed the project for several years. Unfortunately, he is term-limited and will vacate his seat in April 2011. If substantial progress is not made soon, it is possible that the project could be shelved again. Funding is all that stops us from moving forward with a site development and management plan.

d. NA

Objectives and End Products/Deliverables

a. Objectives:

- Within 18 months of grant award, develop a master plan that will guide the repair, operation and management of the Manitou Incline.
- Engage the community in a public process to identify recommended strategies that will form the basis of the plan.
- Identify priorities and funding sources to begin implementing the plan within 6 months of plan completion; open facility within 18 months of plan completion.

b. Planning will require the following tasks:

- Survey utilities
- Contract for pedestrian and vehicle traffic study, parking analysis and user counts
- Consult with engineer regarding slope stability, trail design and trail construction cost
- Conduct resource inventories – historical assessment, biological inventory, sensitive and endangered species
- Develop revenue plan
- Hire public facilitator and conduct public meetings
- Survey/Interview general public and users to identify issues, usage rates, preferences, etc.
- Identify revenue sources for trail and trailhead development, management and operation
- Draft plan document
- Present to stakeholder groups and City Councils for adoption

c. The end product will be a planning document that includes the following items:

Incline History

Existing Conditions

Trail Management Plan

Trail Design and Materials

Trail Maintenance

Natural Resource Management

Trailhead Amenities

Parking Management Plan

Operation and Management Plan

Liability

Rules of Use

Enforcement

Emergency Response

Revenue and Funding

Volunteers

Marketing and Special Events

Prioritized Implementation Schedule

Cost Estimates

Project Implementation

Colorado Springs is engaging in the proposed planning process with the goal of opening the Incline for public recreation within three years. The success of the project will be evaluated first on our ability to complete the planning process within the stated timeframe, then on our ability to secure funding and to make critical infrastructure improvements.

Already, groups have come forward and pledged their commitment to helping the City secure the funding needed to implement the plan once it is completed. The Trails and Open Space Coalition has offered to secure private donations from their members; Manitou Springs Open Space Advisory Committee will consider recommending an allocation of the sales and property tax Manitou dedicates to open space and trails; the Hill Family Foundation will entertain future grant requests. Additional sources of funding include user fees, parking fees, sponsorships, Conservation Trust Funds, GOCO and State Trails grants and private foundation grants. General fund sources are not likely given current fiscal constraints, but the project would be eligible for funding through the Colorado Springs TOPS Program (.1% sales and use tax for trails, open space and parks). The Rocky Mountain Field Institute has offered to assist with trail building and landscape restoration. The City will also seek assistance from Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado.

Partnerships and Financial Support

a. The Cities of Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs, the Pikes Peak Cog Railway, Colorado Springs Utilities, Manitou Springs Economic Development Council and Trails and Open Space Coalition of the Pikes Peak Region have pledged professional staff time to this project as members of the Incline Task Force. Their work will include financial and legal services, technical assistance preparing user surveys, conducting public outreach, and developing a marketing plan. Colorado Spring Utilities will survey for all utilities and provide legal assistance with the license agreement. Rocky Mountain Field Institute will provide assistance with trail design. The Hill Family Foundation is providing the matching funds for this project.

b. The project partners are:

City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department: The City is leading the planning effort and will provide a variety of services that do not qualify as in-kind support but are critical to the process including GIS and map production, landscape architecture and renderings, financial and legal services, public outreach and public facilitation assistance.

City of Manitou Springs: Manitou is providing meeting space to the City for six public meetings at a value of \$1200. Manitou will provide financial and legal assistance, public outreach, and public facilitation assistance.

Hill Family Foundation: The Foundation made a \$25,000 cash grant to the City for the project.

Support

The attached letters express support for the project for both the planning phase and for future implementation. Specific investments from groups are clearly identified. Letters have been received from all Incline property owners, partners, key task force members, users, and Manitou residents. Local users attest to the benefit of the Incline for recreation and the USOC describes the importance of the facility to elite athletic training.

In addition, several articles spanning 13 years have been included to demonstrate the enduring demand for and commitment to this project.